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*On the Pursuit of FALSE PLEASURE, and the
Mischiefs of IMMODERATE GAMING:*

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at the

Abbey - Church at Bath,

For Promoting the

Charity and Subscription

TOWARDS THE

GENERAL HOSPITAL

In that CITY,

On *SUNDAY, April 22, 1750.*

Publish'd at the Request of the

GOVERNORS *of the said* HOSPITAL.

By JOHN BROWN, M. A.

Chaplain to the Right Reverend the Lord
Bishop of Carlisle.

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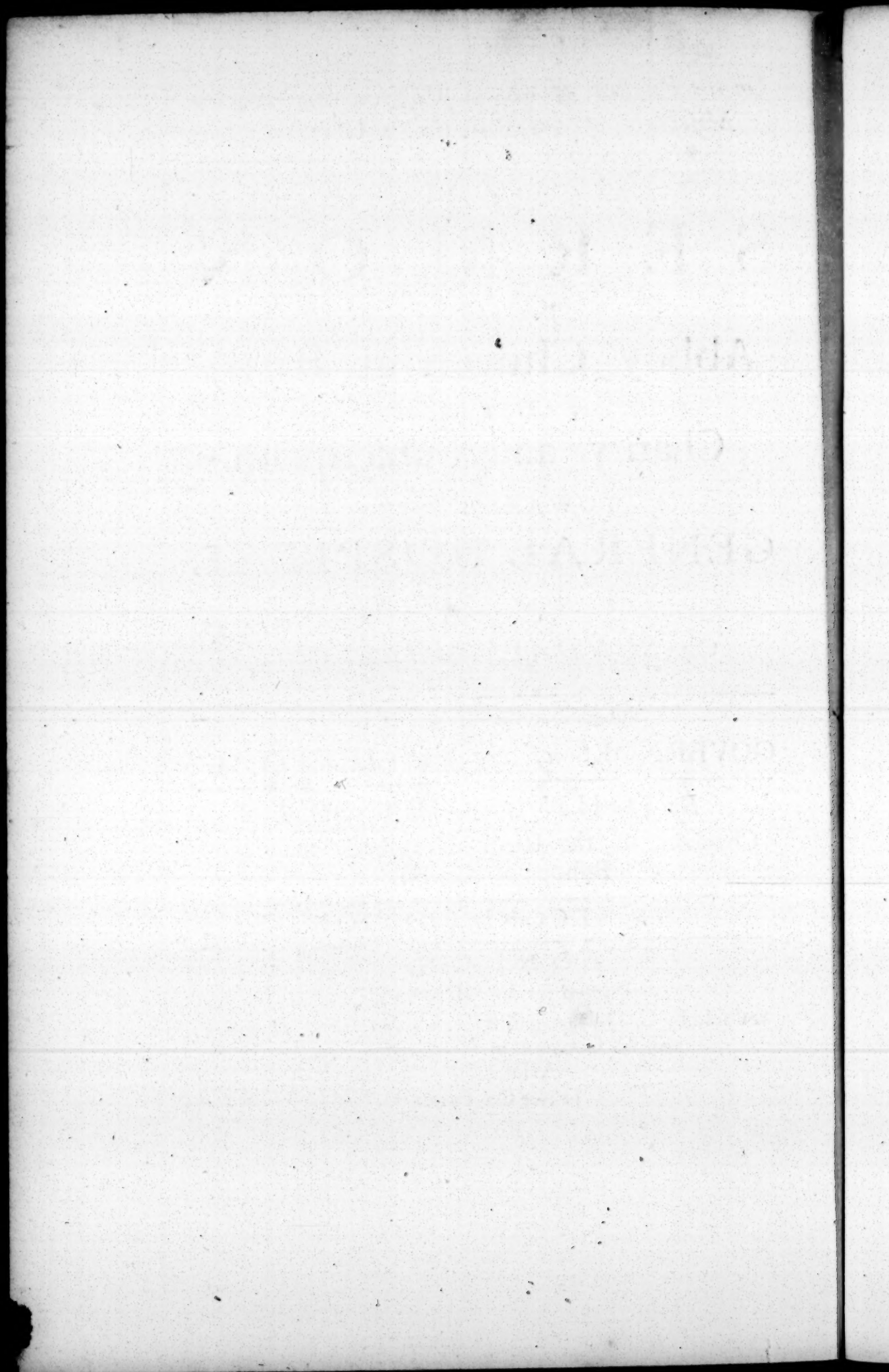
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To His GRACE the

DUKE OF BEDFORD,
PRESIDENT;

And to the other

GOVERNORS

OF THE

General Hospital, *or* Infirmary,

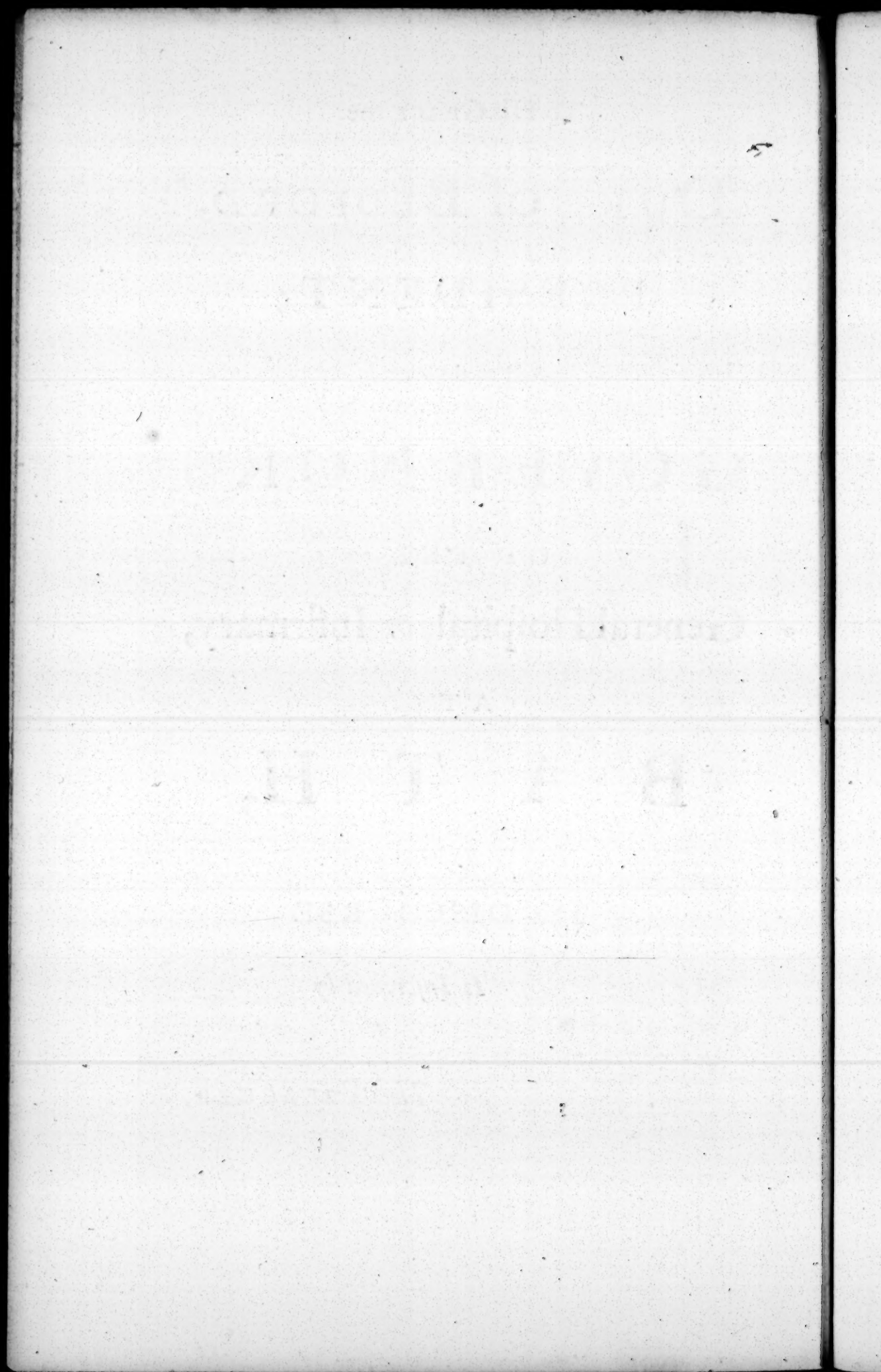
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B A T H,

This DISCOURSE

Is Inscribed by

The PREACHER.



PROV. Chap. iii. Ver. 17.

Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness.

THERE is a Variety of Principles which, by Turns, have been found to predominate in Human Nature; and which, according to the Revolutions of Times and Manners, have been observed, successively, to sway the Conduct of Mankind. In one Age, a Sense of Religion, and Duty, hath generally prevailed; In another, the Prospect of future Glory: In a Third, the contracted Views of Interest and Cunning: In a Fourth, the dissolute Maxims of Luxury and Pleasure.

I THINK it may, without any Imputation of Prejudice or Partiality, be affirmed, that the last of these is the peculiar and leading Principle of the present Times. Those of Duty and Glory have had their Day: They have, by Turns, reigned, and been exploded: That of

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interested Cunning, it must be owned, is yet in Force; but this subsists rather as a Means, than an End: We are cunning, indeed, and laborious to heap up; but we only heap up, that we may squander. Immediate Gratification is the great Object of Pursuit; and Futurity is lost, amidst our Rage for present Enjoyment.

HENCE it hath come to pass, that even *Religion* and *Virtue* can only gain Access to the debauched Imagination, upon such Conditions as are almost unworthy of their native Excellence; and while, in happier Ages, they could draw Mankind to their Party, by holding forth a *Crown of eternal Glory*, as the *Prize* of their *high Calling*, they are now reduced to that last Necessity of alluring their supine Votaries, by pointing out the *near* and *flowery Path* of *Pleasure*.

YET even on this low Principle, Religion and Virtue, if fairly listen'd to, will baffle all Opposition: For such is their uniform Nature, and extensive Energy; so entire and universal is their Influence, with Respect to Man, that present Pleasure, no less than future Happiness, is their essential and unvary'd Characteristic. Left
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therefore we should proceed on Principles which by some, might be esteem'd chimerical and groundless, let us consider them, chiefly at least, in this single Light; and, from this Examination, I doubt not but it will appear, First, That no *true* or *lasting Pleasure* is, or can be obtained, without the Practice of VIRTUE: Secondly, That from the sincere Practice of it, the truest and most lasting Pleasures do naturally arise: And, lastly, from these Truths, a few Observations will offer themselves to our Consideration, relative to the present Occasion.

First, THEREFORE, it will appear to every *considerate Mind*, THAT NO TRUE AND LASTING PLEASURE IS, OR CAN BE OBTAINED, WITHOUT THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE.

YET here, even some of the grossest Vices put in their Claim, and pretend to conduct their Followers to *true Pleasure*: But, in the End, it will appear, that their Pretences are the completest, as they are the most fatal, of all Delusions. Debauchery and Intemperance bring their own Punishments along with them: They destroy the Health of the Body, and all the Powers of the Mind. Luxury and Prodigality

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are no less fatal to our Fortunes : Every Violation of the social Duties is attended with some embittering or ruinous Circumstance. If we are arbitrary, oppressive, or uncharitable, tho' we be so cautious as to evade the Laws, yet a just and publick Ignominy will overtake us : If we avowedly violate the Rules of Justice, by Theft, Robbery, or Plunder, that Justice we have defy'd will overwhelm us, and our Reward must be Fines or Imprisonment, Banishment or Death. Thus, the natural Inheritance of every grosser Vice, is Misery and Ruin : By turns they lead their Votaries from Poverty to Want, from Disease to Rottenness, from Jails to Gibbets.

THIS Part of the Subject might be much enlarged on : But I wou'd hope, that to have touched upon it in this general Manner, may, at present, be sufficient : I would hope, that none who appear on this *humane* and *charitable* Occasion, can be the declared and determined Enemies of VIRTUE. I would therefore address you, as those who *mean well*, but who yet may be *mistaken* ; as those who may unknowingly have wandered from the Path of Virtue and true Pleasure, and may possibly
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therefore thank *the warning Voice*, that bids them *return* and walk in it.

GIVE me Leave, therefore, to represent to you, the Folly of expecting true and permanent Pleasure, from a violent Attachment to what is generally called even innocent Diversion or Amusement, in Exclusion of the higher Pursuits of Benevolence and Virtue. It is not often that a Preacher hath an Opportunity of addressing those, to whom an unreserved Discourse on this Subject can be of such particular Importance. What therefore is offered on this Occasion, as it is *said*, so I hope it will be *received*, in the Spirit of Charity. We stand here in the Presence of GOD, before whom the Greatest of us are but Dust and Ashes; in whose Eyes no Distinction can take Place, but that of *Virtue* and *Vice*, the *Righteous* and the *Sinner*.

Now the first Circumstance which demonstrates that what is called mere Diversion, or Amusement, cannot be a sufficient Source of true continued Pleasure, is this: That if we pursue them constantly, they grow tedious and tiresome; and, if we intermit them, they give us Pain rather than Pleasure, in Reflection.

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That they grow tiresome when long pursued, is clear from that perpetual Rotation, which is found necessary to relieve the nauseating Mind : Were they of such a Nature as to satisfy the Soul of Man, should we need to labour after a perpetual Change? We read in ancient History, of a Kingdom sunk to such a Degree of Effeminacy, that a Royal Reward was proclaimed for him, who should find out a new Pleasure : And do you think that a new One would have been sought at such Expence, had not all the old Ones been exhausted? Even such seems to be our present Situation : We toil, like Children in Pursuit of Rainbows, after these chimerical and air-painted Objects of Delight : When we come upon the Spot, we find, that what at a Distance appeared so gay, had but a false Splendour, which is vanished on a nearer Approach. Yet still, as new Objects rise before us, we renew our Pursuit, find ourselves again deceiv'd, and thus pass our Time between Expectation and Disappointment.

AND as this eager Appetite for mere Diversion affords but little of true Pleasure, even in the Period of Enjoyment ; so, when that is over, Reflection intrudes and makes us miserable : For the Mind having been either lost

in total Diffipation, or intent on Objects but ill suited to its Nature, when it comes to look at Home, finds nothing to support or rest itself upon. Where there is no inward Consciousness of worthy Designs, and suitable Actions, the Mind turns with Aversion from beholding itself; and thus Leisure and Thought, two of the greatest Blessings that can be vouchsaf'd to those who know to use them, become a Burthen unsupportable. Hence every false and dissipating Pleasure is again greedily embrac'd; and we seek not so much to obtain Delight, as to get rid of Misery.

THIS farther Circumstance may be added, with Regard to those who are not quite abandon'd in their Principles; that an immoderate Attachment to Diversions does, upon the whole, in the strictest Sense, partake of the Nature of Vice: For tho' the temperate Pursuit of a single Amusement may be innocent, so long as it leaves Room for Pursuits of a higher Nature; yet when the Soul becomes totally immersed in trifling or idle Gratifications, the superior Faculties of the Mind lie dormant and neglected. The Seeds of Virtue, tho' they be sown by Nature in the Human Mind, do yet require some Degree of Labour and Cultivation,
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e'er they can put forth their Branches, and produce good Fruit; But by this untoward Management, instead of aiding their natural Efforts, we overwhelm and choak them in their first Growths; and thus give the Start to the latent Seeds of Corruption, which infallibly spring up in Tares and Thistles. Thus the native Energy of the Soul is destroyed, the Duties of Life are not so much as thought of, and all Improvement in Religion and Virtue rendered utterly impossible. Hence, I say, as an immoderate Attachment to Diversion tends to extinguish every Degree of Virtue, it partakes, in the strictest Sense, of the Nature of Vice, and will therefore stand exposed to all its Consequences.

So much may justly be affirmed of every Amusement, even the most innocent. But there is one, much indeed sought after at present, with a View to Pleasure, which surely, of all others, has the least Pretence to it; and which, above every other, repays its blind Followers with Vexation and Disappointment: I mean, that of *immoderate Gaming*.

To analyze it therefore into its Principles.—
The very best Consequence that could be
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hoped for, even supposing what is impossible, a continued Run of Fortune,---the very best, I say, that can be hoped, wou'd be an inordinate Lust of Gain: For, it is always observ'd, that the Successful, in this Way, grow proportionably covetous: Hence arises a certain Eagerness, a restless Craving of the Mind, after an Object which can never satisfy it. And even this, ignoble as it is, is deeply tinctured with perpetual Doubts, and the Fear of a Reverse of Fortune: Hence the most distressful Anxiety arises; the inward Peace and Balance of the Mind is destroy'd, and the distracted Heart set at Variance with itself.

BUT this is a very weak and imperfect Picture of a *Gaming-Table*: For, as the Tide of Fortune ebbs, at least as often as it flows, so the sad Reverse, to which every Adventurer is exposed, awakens by Turns every gloomy and accursed Passion of the Soul. Here we may often see a numerous Assembly of *both Sexes*, chain'd down by the Magick of the fatal Circle; the *Sorcerer* seated triumphant in the Midst, with his Instruments of Deceit before him: At length the Spell begins to work, and the Engine of Falshood is put in Motion: The enchanted Crowd stand fix'd with anxious Eyes

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and beating Hearts, 'till, in the End, Fate proclaims the Magician victorious; who, by secret and unsuspected Arts, hath convey'd the *Wealth* of his Followers into his *own Pocket*; leaving them nothing in Return but the just Reward of Grief and Vexation, Indignation and Remorse. Here one may often see the *fairest Faces*, form'd, surely, for more amiable and virtuous Purposes, dim'd with Envy, or kindling into Rage; by Turns distracted with the Tyranny of every vile Affection; transformed from Graces into Furies; squandering those Fortunes, which their provident and indulgent Parents had bequeathed them, with far other Hopes and Expectations; setting to the Hazard the very Means of their future Support; and along with it, what ought to be still more dear, the Purity of Virgin Innocence. And is this the Path that leads to true and lasting Pleasures? Are these the Boasts and Ornaments of the *softer Sex*? Can these Accomplishments form the affectionate Wife, the tender Mother, the faithful and domestic Friend? Can these engage the Lover, or fix the Affections of the Husband? While these things are done, Can we wonder that the marry'd State should every Day grow more hated, more dreadful? Can we wonder that the Maid should pass
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her Days in Neglect, and the Wife be discarded, as ruinous and intolerable?

THE fashionable Absurdities of our *own Sex*, in these Matters, are equally amazing and destructive. Do not we see *Men* passing their best Hours, and their Prime of Life, in these Scenes of *Folly*, whose Rank, Fortunes, and natural Abilities might entitle them to the highest Offices in the Common-wealth? Degrad- ing themselves to the low Level of professed Gamesters, and herding with these, as their chief Intimates, their bosom Friends: Blind to every Kind of Merit, but that of the learned Artist, whose boasted Qualification is, that he is both able and willing to ease them of the *useless Burthen* of an *Estate*. Yet, fond as they are of this mad Extravagance in Theory, the Practice of it is attended with the most consummate Misery: The same Conflict of torment- ing Passions, as hath already been mentioned, rises to blast their unwarrantable Pleasures; and their false Pursuits too generally conclude with cursing themselves, and blaspheming Pro- vidence. Here then behold the *Wretch com- pleted*! Surrounded by a Train of inextrica- ble Miseries! his Fortunes vanished, beyond Redemption! *He cannot work; and to beg he*

is ashamed: He hath disgraced his Ancestors, and ruined his Posterity: Behind him, he sees nothing but Guilt and Shame; before him, nothing but Misery and Despair. What then remains, but that he throw the last fatal Dye for Eternity, and conclude the horrid Scene by a *Halter*, a *Dagger*, or a *Pistol*!

OR if his Fury, Horror, and Despair, break not forth upon *himself*, they are sure to discharge themselves on his *Fellow-Creatures*. His intemperate Wants call aloud for Gratification; and *Force* must restore, what *Folly* deprived him of. Hence those Evils which are rising with unheard of Aggravations: Hence these *Complainings in our Streets*: Hence the Spirit of Violence hath gone out among us; and the Land is fill'd with *Robbery* and *Murder*.

IT may seem strange that such Excesses should be allow'd in a free State: But it is yet more strange, that such Excesses should be allow'd and practis'd among the *Great*, at a Time when there are Laws in Force against them. And do these act the Part of *Magistrates*, of *Legislators*, of *Patriots*, or of Men, who either by a Toleration, by Encouragement, or Example, thus wantonly set at Defiance
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the very Laws which themselves have made or recommended? Can true Pleasure, or Satisfaction, arise from a Conduct so inconsistent with itself? Or, can the leading Part of Mankind ever hope, that their Inferiors will reverence the Laws, while they see their *Superiors* publicly despise them? Hence, I fear, many of our greatest Evils flow; and hence, I fear, much greater are to be expected. A learned Heathen, a Man equally renowned as a Captain, a Philosopher, and Politician^a; this Great Person informs us, That nothing was so remarkable in the fam'd *Lacedæmonian* Republick, as that perfect and entire Submission given to the Laws by the *greatest* People and *highest* Ranks of the Common-wealth: He accounts for the Stability and long Duration of that Republic from this one Principle, above all others; and tells us, That this Circumstance no sooner ceased, than the *Lacedæmonian* State partook of the common Fate of Empires. How far this Observation may relate to our *own Times* and *Country*, I am unwilling to say. They whom it more nearly concerns, must needs be better Judges: And sure it behoves them seriously to reflect upon it. I would not designedly be either timid or presuming. But this is

^a Xenophon.

certain,

certain, and this mine Office obliges me to say; that the united Voices of all Ages and Nations do proclaim this Truth, That a general and open Contempt of establish'd Laws among the *higher Ranks* of Men, hath always been a preceding Symptom, a certain Indication, of the approaching Dissolution of a State.— If, therefore, you prefer a well-grounded and lasting to a transient and short-liv'd Pleasure: If you have any Regard for your *Country* and *Posterity*; if your Passions for low and selfish Gratifications hath not effaced the natural Impressions of Humanity, *Finally, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Report, if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise, THINK OF THESE THINGS.*

IN consequence of these Reflections, which demonstrate how fatally we are misled in our Pursuits of Pleasure, let me now in Conclusion point out the *real*, and let me add, the *easy* Method, of obtaining it. And this will be found to consist in the sincere Practice of *every Virtue*; or in other Words, in the unfeigned Exercise of *Christian Charity*, which is declared to be *the End of the Commandment.*

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BUT here it may be proper first to enquire, Why, if *true Virtue* and *true Charity* be the same; Why, in an Age confessedly not wanting in a Spirit of *Charity* and *Benevolence*, so little *true* and *substantial Virtue* should be found?

THIS tho', perhaps, at first View, a difficult Question, yet admits of a very easy Solution, from two Causes, arising from the same blind Principle of present Gratification; For, in the first Place, tho' we want not the Feelings of Benevolence, when an Object of Pity strikes our Eyes, yet we have so many Views of *false Pleasure* and *Amusement*; so many Calls of a *meaner* and more *selfish* Kind to gratify, as not only lessen our Desire of relieving the Distress we see, but infallibly prevent any Care, or Inquiry after such Objects as fall not beneath our Notice. In a word; tho' to relieve the Pain in our own Breast, we relieve a present Object of Distress, yet we do it not upon any steady Principle, and, therefore, must ever do it in such a Manner as is partial and defective.

THE other Reason is, because at present there generally prevails a very imperfect Idea of the

the Nature of *Charity*: For whereas it consists in a *steady* and *sincere* Desire of promoting the Happiness of all Mankind; the common Notion is, that the Whole lies in relieving an Object of Distress: Hence we see Multitudes who seem to think themselves charitable, while they give Way to every vile Inclination, except only that of a harden'd Heart. Hence we see the one Sex triumphing in a single Act of Compassion, as the Sum of all Virtue, while they indulge in Debauchery, Prophaness, and Revenge: And the other think themselves perfectly charitable, while they riot in Envy, in Calumny, and Slander.

BUT far different is the true Idea of Christian *Charity*. St. Paul tells us, that *Tho' we should give all our Goods to feed the Poor, and have not Charity, we are nothing*. But, that the true Fruit of the Spirit is *Love, Joy, Long-suffering, Kindness, Patience, Temperance*: That *Charity envieth not, is not puffed up, not easily provoked, seeketh not her own, rejoiceth not in Evil, but rejoiceth in the Truth; hopeth, believeth, and endureth all Things*.

IT is from this Blessed and Heavenly Temper of Mind, that *true and lasting Pleasure* is
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to be expected : It is this that conquers every turbulent and uneasy Passion ; and, like its Divine Author, *subdues all Things unto itself*. This heavenly Temper, which we need only wish for to be possessed of, gives that calm and lasting Joy to its Possessor, which is sought for in vain by the *Gay* and the *Licentious*. It partakes not of the Nature of Amusements, which often disgust even when we seek them ; but every additional Act, nay, every sincere Wish of Kindness which we bestow, raiseth us to still higher and higher Degrees of Pleasure, which flows upon the Mind in Proportion as the Mind grows more virtuous. Then indeed, those very Amusements which otherwise can afford nothing but Disappointment, do in an inferior Degree become the Means of real Pleasure : We shall not, indeed, think so highly of these, neither on the other hand, shall we be baulked in our Expectations : For as we shall set no higher Value upon them, than what in their Nature they deserve, so we shall reap from them all that Satisfaction which they can, or were designed to give us. They will then be as so many tributary Streams of Pleasure, flowing in and uniting with the Great One of CHARITY and VIRTUE.

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NEITHER is the Pleasure which *true Virtue* and unlimited *Charity* afford, confined like that of false Pleasure, to the short Period of Action. It is their peculiar Nature, not to lose their Force, but to increase, to double by Reflection. Here, indeed, lies their great and essential Superiority, over every other Source of Delight: For, as the busy Mind will often descend into itself; so the Vain, the Capricious, the Idle, the Licentious, when Thought drags them Homewards, in Spite of their Follies, they wander thro' themselves as thro' an empty and desolate Habitation, *seeking Rest and finding none*. But the *truly Virtuous* can always find a *Friend at Home*; a faithful and domestic Friend, his own Conscience. In this happy Commerce he finds unceasing Pleasure; Here he can pass Hours, and Days, without looking out for one empty and foreign Amusement. This affords that still-increasing Satisfaction, gives that perfect Repose, that Divine Contentment to the Soul, which fills up the whole Capacity for Bliss, and leaves not even a Wish for more.

AND as every Branch of *Virtue*, and unfeigned *Charity*, is a Source of the purest and most

most lasting Pleasure; so, in a peculiar Manner, is that most essential Part of it, which I am at present called upon to recommend: I mean that of *relieving the Distressed*.

THE Nature of that *charitable Foundation*, which we are here met to forward, is so well known, that I suppose it were needless to dwell on explaining it. In one word, it is a Fund established in Behalf of the Distempered Poor of this Kingdom, who are capable of being relieved by the *Medicinal Waters* of this Place; but incapable, thro' their low Circumstances, of partaking of their Benefits.

AND, sure, if any Principle of Humanity can touch your Hearts, you will joyfully contribute to so noble a Purpose. You here have the Opportunity of making yourselves the Ministers of Providence, in working Effects almost miraculous; of giving *Health* to the Sick, *Eyes* to the Blind, and *Feet* to the Lame: Of being the good Angels, sent from Heaven to prepare the *healing* Pool for the Withered, the Halt, and the Maimed: And this, at so easy a Rate, as that of retrenching an *unnecessary Expence*, and keeping clear of the Anxieties of deluding Folly. Here, then, deposite a Share

of that Wealth, which, on other Occasions, you are so free to bestow ; for here, tho' you give, you cannot be Losers; but will receive in Return an ample Recompence of Peace, and lasting Pleasure.

COULD you be present, personally present, to the many Objects of Distress, which thro' this Kingdom now lie panting, and languishing, for these Waters of Health, yet unable, thro' their Poverty, to reach them ; sure I am, that your natural Humanity would kindle into Compassion: Did you see them lift up their Eyes to you for Relief, would you refuse to extend the bounteous Hand, and save your Fellow-Creature, by dispensing an inconsiderable Pittance of your Fortune? If not, then let your Compassion rise into *Virtue*, and do that from Principle, to which you would be prompted by an honest Passion.

FIGURE to yourselves, I beseech you, an industrious Family, once maintain'd in Decency by a Father's Labour, and a Mother's Care, but now reduced to Penury, by an afflicting Distemper fallen on him, who was late its Comfort and Support: By your timely Generosity he partakes of these Medicinal Waters,
and

and. returns home, bleſs'd with Health and Strength. Could this World afford you a ſincerer Pleaſure than to ſee his ſmiling Infants welcome his happy Return, and bleſs and pray for the generous Hand that had reſtored their fond Parent to his Health, and enabled him once more to provide them with their daily Bread? Would not your Hearts glow with Joy, when you ſhould hear him, with Gratitude, recount the Glories of this Place, to his liſtening Children; when he ſhould tell them of the Numbers he had ſeen here, diſtinguiſhed by their Birth, Rank, and Fortune; yet ſtill leſs diſtinguiſhed by their Birth, Rank, or Fortune, than by their Nobleneſs of Mind, and boundleſs *Charity*.

MANY of you are bleſs'd with *Health*, as well as *Affluence*: If ſo, let your Gratitude to Heaven appear in your Bounty: It is the peculiar Mark of a generous Mind, to be ſteddy to *Virtue* in a proſperous Condition.

SOME of you, doubtleſs, labour under a Want of Health. To ſuch, can there need an Argument to excite their Bounty? Let the Senſe and Feeling of your own Infirmities teach you to pity thoſe of others: Of ſuch too, as
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are not blessed like you, with the outward Conveniencies of Life; but, besides the Affliction of Disease, labour under the additional Ones, of *Poverty, Cold, and Hunger.*

AND, let this Consideration be laid to Heart by all: That whatever prosperous Condition you may now enjoy, yet as Age and Infirmities steal on, the evil Days will come, when you shall say, *you have no Pleasure in them.* In this last Period of Affliction, common to the Greatest and the Least; when neither Wealth, Palaces, Attendance, Titles, or Distinction, can yield you Comfort, when every outward Support shall fail you, then shall this *one, this only Source* of lasting Pleasure break forth with double Vigour in the Mind; and when every other Foundation gives Way, this Reflection will still bear you up, even in Sicknes and in Death, that you had *relieved the Distresses* of your *Fellow-Creatures*; that you had been *Eyes to the Blind, and Feet to the Lame*; that *the Blessing of him that was ready to perish had come upon you*; and that you had caused the *Widow's Heart to sing for Joy.*

FINALLY, if you can cast up your Eyes to Heaven, and contemplate the Happiness there

there prepared for the Just and Merciful, you will find such Pleasures attending on your *Virtue*, as nothing on Earth can either rival or represent: *Such as Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive.*

THUS in every Light are *Charity* and *Happiness* centred, thro' every Period of our Existence. The Joys of *Vanity*, or *Vice*, are like hasty Brooks, noisy and impetuous, but of no Duration: Those of *true Charity, Virtue*, and *Religion*, are like clear and constant Streams, calm and majestic in their Course; they run uninterrupted thro' Life, they shall be continued beyond the Grave; and not only continued, but augmented into *Rivers of Joy*, which shall run at God's Right Hand for evermore.

F I N I S.

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I. **E**SSAYS on the Characteristics of the Earl of Shaftesbury. I. On Ridicule considered as a Test of Truth. II. On the Motives to Virtue, and the Necessity of a *Religious Principle*. III. On *Revealed Religion*, and Christianity. The Second Edition. By the A U T H O R of this Sermon.

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